

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8014

INFO AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS

SUBJECT: IMPRISONMENT OF PRICE SISTERS

REF: DAWKINS-JAMES TELECON FEBRUARY 14.

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. FOUR IRISH PRISONERS, THE SISTERS DOLORES PRICE (23) AND MARION PRICE (19), GERARD KELLY (19) AND HUGH FEENEY (21) RECEIVED LIFE SENTENCES AFTER THEIR TRIAL AND CONVICTION AT WINCHESTER FOLLOWING THE LONDON CAR BOMBING LAST MARCH WHICH CAUSED HUNDREDS OF INJURIES AND THE DEATH OF ONE MAN. THE CONVICTIONS WERE FOR CONSPIRACY TO CAUSE, AND CAUSING, EXPLOSIONS. THESE SENTENCES ARE BEING SERVED AT BRIXTON PRISON (IN LONDON).

2. AFTER SENTENCING THE PRICE SISTERS TRIED TO INSIST ON SERVING THEIR SENTENCES IN A NORTHERN IRELAND PRISON, SAYING THEY WOULD GO ON HUNGER STRIKE UNTIL THEIR REQUEST WAS MET. BRITISH AUTHORITIES DID NOT AGREE TO THIS. NORMAL PROCEDURE IS FOR PERSONS TRIED AND CONVICTED BEFORE A COURT TO BE SENT TO A PRISON IN THAT COURT'S JURISDICTION. PRISONERS MAY APPLY FOR TRANSFER TO ANOTHER PRISON, BUT EACH CASE IS CONSIDERED ON ITS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MERITS TAKING INTO ACCOUNT SUCH FACTORS AS THE EXISTENCE

OF COMPASSIONATE GROUNDS AND THE APPROPRIATENESS OF TRANSFER IN LIGHT OF THE OFFENSE AND SENTENCE. IN THE PRICE SISTERS' CASE, HOME SECRETARY STATED THAT IT WOULD NOT BE IN PUBLIC INTEREST TO GRANT THEIR REQUEST.

3. PRICE SISTERS HAVE BEEN ON HUNGER STRIKE WHICH HAS REQUIRED THEIR BEING FORCE FED BY BRITISH PRISON AUTHORITIES. REPORTERS AND MP'S WHO HAVE SEEN THEM STATE NO UNDUE FORCE HAS BEEN USED IN THIS PROCESS AND

THAT SISTERS ARE PHYSICALLY UNLIKELY TO COME TO ANY HARM.

4. IRA HAS ATTEMPTED TO ORCHESTRATE SYMPATHY CAMPAIGN IN BRITAIN, IRELAND AND ABROAD TO OBTAIN PRICE SISTERS' TRANSFER. END UNCLASSIFIED

5. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. COMMENT: THERE IS NO LIKELIHOOD THAT HMG WILL CONSENT TO TRANSFER OF PRICE SISTERS IN CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION. THEY CONSIDER TRANSFER REQUESTS TO BE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED AND ARE CONCERNED ABOUT PUBLIC REACTION TO ANY SUCH CONCESSION. ADDITIONALLY, THEY BELIEVE PRESENCE OF PRICE SISTERS IN NI POLITICAL DETENTION PRISONS WOULD BE USED AS EXCUSE FOR DEMONSTRATIONS AND RIOTS BY IRA DETAINEES, POSING A MAJOR PROBLEM OF SECURITY IN AN ALREADY DIFFICULT SITUATION. THE CAMPAIGN TO TRANSFER THE SISTERS HAS NOT RESULTED IN EVOKING SYMPATHY FOR THEM IN BRITAIN. END LIMITED OFFICIAL USE.

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TAGS: PINS, UK, (PRICE, DOLORES), (PRICE, MARION), (KELLY, GERARD), (FEENEY, HUGH)
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